

vis-a-vis the US and Russia.

Q. No. 5. Saudi Arabia and Iran both have significant place in Pakistan's foreign policy. (20) How Pakistan can maintain friendly relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran, especially after the mediation of China between the two countries?

Q. No. 6. Palestine conflict is a long-standing one on the United Nations table. Discuss its (20)

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Introduction:

Pakistan has tried several times to bring Saudi Arabia and Iran on negotiating table but all in vain. Recently, both the countries announced to engage diplomatically and reopen their embassies. These dialogues were brokered by China. Both the countries have significant place in Pakistan's foreign policy due to cultural, religious and historical ties. Pakistan can maintain friendly relations with both countries by engaging in Islamic cooperation organization (OIC) to counter common issues, increasing trade volume with both countries, energy cooperations, reducing sectarian issues, integrating

saudi Arabia in CPEC, maintaining balanced foreign Policy through neutral approach, Leveraging from China's influence in the region.

Importance of Saudi Arabia and Iran in Pakistan's foreign Policy:

Maintaining good relations with all Muslims countries has always remain significant in foreign policy of Pakistan especially with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Sacred Places of Pakistan are situated in Saudi Arabia therefore this country is near to the heart of the citizens of Pakistan. Moreover, there are cultural, economic and strategic ties between these countries.

Approximately 4 million Pakistani diaspora

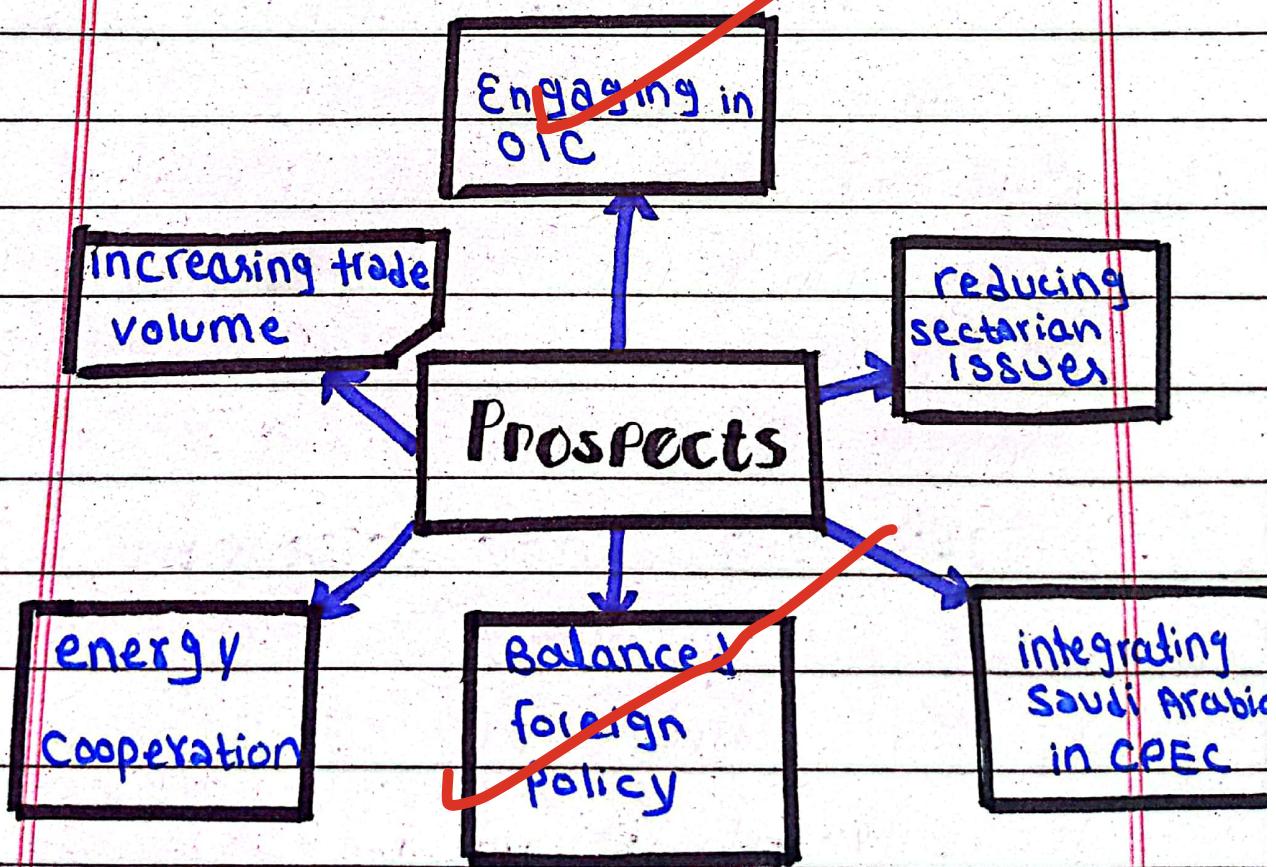
is living in the middle East, with the majority living in Saudi Arabia."

Source: Ministry of overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource development.

This diaspora is a source of generating (remit) remittances in Pakistan. Further, these countries are also important source of oil and gas in Pakistan.

Prospects for maintaining good relations with the Iran and Saudi Arabia:

The rapprochement of Iran and Saudi Arabia has opened many opportunities for Pakistan to maintain good relations with them.



i) Adopting balanced Approach:

Pakistan has always faced difficulties in maintaining balanced foreign policy approach between the Saudi Arabia and Iran due to their longstanding animosity. Saudi Arabia has always exert pressure on Pakistan in this regard.

"Saudi Arabia has pressurized Pakistan to curtain its relations with Iran due to their rivalry"

(Source: PIDE Report 2023)

But now after the rapprochement of two countries, Pakistan has gained an opportunity to adopt balanced approach by remaining neutral.

ii) Increasing trade volume:

After the rapprochement of two countries, Pakistan now can diversify its economy by maintaining trade relation with both

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of the countries, without at the cost of one country or in the part.

Pakistan exported \$507 million to Saudi

Arabia in 2022 as compared to 4401

million in 2021. (Source: OEC World Report)

iii) Reducing sectarian issues:

Pakistan has always been affected by the sectarian issues caused by the Shia-Sunni conflict of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Many extremist groups came into existence due to the support of Iran.

"Iran was supporting Shia group

in Balochistan." (Source: Dawn Report)

With the help of Saudi Arabia,

Pakistan now can resolve these

sectarian issues by promoting

religious tolerance and protecting

rights of minorities in the

region.

iv) Integrating Saudi Arabia in CPEC:

Both Pakistan and Iran are part of CPEC and are leveraging from the benefits of it. They both can integrate Saudi Arabia into CPEC to increase regional connectivity, economic growth, employment and investment in the three countries.

China aims to integrate Saudi Vision 2030 into its BRI Project.

Source: Council of Foreign Relations (CFR)

This will also increase the influence of three countries in the region.

v) Energy Cooperation:

Iran and Saudi Arabia have natural resources like oil and gas. Pakistan can

add and highlight references/examples against these arguments.

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engage with these countries into tri lateral energy projects in order to fulfill the demands of energy sector of Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan can complete Iran-Pakistan Gas pipeline on immediate turn with the help of Saudi Arabia. Because Saudi Arabia will Preverize USA due to its dependence on Saudi Arabia's oil.

vi) Engaging in Islamic cooperation organization (OIC):

Organization of Islamic Cooperation is intergovernmental organizations a platform for protecting rights and interests of the Muslim world. Pakistan can engage into OIC along with Iran and Saudi Arabia to resolve common issues like terrorism, sectarian issues and climate cooperation.

viii) Leveraging from China's influence:

China's influence in the Middle East is increased due to its BRI projects, trades, and facilitating rapprochement of Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan can increase its ties with China to increase its influence in the region. This will improve its relations with both countries.

Conclusion:

Hence, from the above discussion, it is clear that Iran and Saudi Arabia's rapprochement has opened a door to build friendly relations with both countries through various prospects. This also increases the significance of both countries in the foreign policy of Pakistan.